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THE
FUNCTION OF A PUBLIC LIBRARY
AND ITS
VALUE TO A COMMUNITY.



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AND ITS
VALUE TO A COMMUNITY.

A PAPER READ BEFORE "THE ROUND TABLE,"
AT ST. LOUIS CLUB, SATURDAY, NOV. 8, 1884.

BY
FREDERICK M. CRUNDEN.

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THE FUNCTION OF A PUBLIC LIBRARY AND ITS VALUE TO A COMMUNITY.

I can not venture upon so violent a departure from precedent, nor am I willing to discredit my knighthood by presenting myself before "The Round Table" unaccompanied by some array of statistics such as befits a member of the order. But I hasten to give assurance that my retinue is limited to a small troop, which may be reviewed with a single glance of the eye. These must be taken as merely an earnest of the vast contingent which may be summoned in the interests of the club for the support of the position intrusted to me. For if there is any one qualified to rank close behind an insurance actuary for his resources in the way of statistics, it is a librarian.

It is just one hundred and fifty-two years ago that, through the exertions of that famous printer, there was opened in Philadelphia what Benjamin Franklin has called "the mother of all the North American subscription libraries." That was "the day of small things" in all ways; and this handful of books shelved in the room of one of the members, with a librarian in attendance one hour Wednesdays and two hours Saturdays, presents the same striking contrast to the Boston Public Library of to-day, with its four hundred thousand volumes, as do the thirteen original colonies and their sparse population to the present vast Union with its fifty million inhabitants. This was the first application of the principle of co-operation — the active force in the evolution of the Public Library. This library was incorporated in 1742, and in the course of a few years it absorbed the collections of several other associations modeled after it. In 1745 James Logan gave to the city of Philadelphia a lot with the first building erected for a library in America.

Activity in this direction was not confined to Philadelphia. In 1747 Mr. Abraham Redwood gave £500 for the purchase of books for a public library at Newport. In 1755 the present building was erected by the town at a cost of £5,000. In 1748, seventeen young men in Charleston, formed a club for the purpose of obtaining English periodicals and other current publications. This grew into the Charleston Library Society, incorporated in 1755. In the same year, another library was incorporated by the Winyaw Indigo Society, which adopted this method of utilizing its surplus funds. The library closely followed the church and the school into the Western wilds. In 1796 an Association Library was established at Marietta, Ohio, and in 1802 the "Coon-skin Library" (so-called because the fund with which it started was obtained from the sale of coon skins) opened at Ames in the same State, with \$100 worth of books brought from Boston in a sack on a pack-horse. Our early forefathers were a knowledge-seeking, book-loving people, and this gave them that force of character and political wisdom which called forth Pitt's famous eulogy: "For myself, I must declare and avow, that in all my reading and observation — and it has been my favorite study — I have read Thucydides and have studied and admired the master states of the world — that for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity and wisdom of conclusion, under such a complication of difficult circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in preference to the General Congress at Philadelphia."

Before the establishment of Franklin's Pioneer Association Library there were college libraries in existence, and some owners of private libraries were generous in allowing the use of their books to friends and neighbors. The next step towards supplying books to the people was the establishment of school libraries. This plan originated in New York, the suggestion made by Governor Clinton in 1827 being embodied in the law of 1835, which allowed the voters of any school district to tax themselves for the foundation and maintenance of a library. Similar laws were shortly adopted by Massa-

chusetts, Michigan, Connecticut, and other States. Owing to administrative difficulties, these laws have in general failed to realize the expectations of their originators; and in most States they have been superseded by statutes providing for the establishment and support of free town libraries. In general these laws, like the English act, allow any city or school district to levy a tax for the support of a public library. In Texas and New Hampshire the amount is left to each city; but in all other States, I believe, there is a maximum fixed. New Hampshire is entitled to the credit of adopting the first law of this kind in 1849. Massachusetts followed in 1851. The English Free Public Libraries Act was passed in 1850; and the first free town library was opened under it in Manchester in 1852.

THE INCEPTION OF THE MODERN FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY MOVEMENT

dates from the enactment of these laws. Among the first institutions founded on this broad basis was the Boston Public Library. It was opened in 1854, and is pre-eminently the greatest popular library, the finest example of the public library system in the world. Since that date more has been accomplished than in all the time preceding. There were then in the United States about sixty-five public libraries of 10,000 volumes or more, counting in all about one million volumes. In 1876 there were 266 of as many as 10,000 volumes each, with an aggregate of seven million volumes. This cumulative growth is still more strikingly shown by a comparison of the number of libraries founded in successive periods of twenty-five years, beginning with 1775, as follows: From 1775 to 1800, thirty, which in 1876 numbered in all 242,171 volumes; between 1800 and 1825, 179, containing in 1876, 2,056,113 volumes; between 1825 and 1850, 551, reporting in 1876 an aggregate of 2,807,218 volumes; and between 1850 and 1875, 2,240 libraries which in 1876 contained 5,481,068 volumes. If the figures for the last eight years could be obtained

they would, I am sure, show the same constantly accelerating progress.

The United States report of 1876 gives a list of 3,682 libraries, containing an aggregate of over twelve million volumes, with permanent funds estimated at \$12,000,000. The private benefactions to libraries reported at that time amounted to \$15,000,000; and it was estimated on good grounds that there was as much more which had not been reported. Five-sixths of the whole sum has been given within the last thirty-five years. The statistics soon to be published by the Government will, I think, show a still larger proportionate aggregate for the last eight years. The most notable donation is that of Enoch Pratt of nearly \$1,000,000 for the foundation of a public library for the city of Baltimore. A citizen of Providence gives \$160,000 for a new building for the public library of that city; and there have been numerous endowments and bequests throughout New England.

The collected statistics of twenty-three libraries "show that out of a total circulation of 6,475,346 volumes in the year 1875, 3,068 were lost through borrowers and 9,089 were worn out, being a total loss of 12,157 volumes, or less than two-tenths of one per cent, a considerably smaller percentage than the loss of a like amount of paper currency in circulation during the same period; and it appears that nearly three times as many books wear out in honorable service as are lost through carelessness and dishonesty."

Our English cousins acknowledge American leadership in the public library movement; yet they can not be regarded as far behind us either in time of starting or in present achievement. The Public Libraries Act of 1850 allows the rate-payers of any borough to levy a tax not exceeding one penny in the pound, that is four mills to the dollar. Under this act more than one hundred libraries have been established in cities and towns of from 6,000 to 500,000 inhabitants. These contain an aggregate of 1,750,000 volumes and issued last year nearly eleven million volumes.

In France the movement but lately inaugurated has made rapid progress, particularly in Paris and the vicinity. In the Department of the Seine there are now 82 public libraries, 54 under official direction and 28 voluntary, with very small fees. Most of these have been established since 1878, since which date the circulation has risen from 29,339 to 514,287, in round numbers from 30,000 to 500,000.

As illustrations of municipal enterprise and liberality in this direction, Boston has for some years made an annual appropriation of \$120,000 for the support of its public library and is about to put up a new building to cost \$690,000. In both Chicago and Cincinnati the yearly appropriation for the public library is \$50,000. Cincinnati already has a fine building, and Chicago is looking toward the erection of a model structure at a cost of half a million. Toronto has recently opened a public library with a fund of \$250,000, and throughout the East almost every little town has its public library. "No town," says Senator Hoar, "can long maintain a high rank among civilized communities unless it add to its other institutions a well chosen library."

Now it seems fair to assume that a policy identified with the most enlightened communities must have some reasonable ground. We see public libraries becoming more and more a feature of the most flourishing municipalities. We find, indeed, that its recognition of the public library as a factor in public education may almost be taken as the test of a city's prosperity and promise. In this country certainly, one might choose his abode on a knowledge of nothing beyond the library privileges afforded, with certainty that the city or town which stands high in that particular, will be a good place for business or residence. In England the cities which most resemble American cities in enterprise and political activity are the same in which the free public library movement finds its best exemplification. There is, of course, in this a reciprocal action of cause and effect. The most wide-awake communities are most ready to adopt good ideas, the execution of which puts

them still farther ahead of their competitors. And this brings us at once to the question which this paper aims to answer:

WHAT IS THE FUNCTION OF A PUBLIC LIBRARY AND OF WHAT
VALUE IS IT TO A COMMUNITY?

The monkish libraries of the middle ages performed a great service to the world in preserving the recorded thought and wisdom of the ancients. The university and college libraries of Europe and America fill an important office, being necessary to the preparation of those who are to go forth as leaders and educators. Great libraries, like the British Museum and the Bibliothèque Nationale, are still more valuable to their respective countries and the world, being accessible to and used by greater numbers. But these two, while public and open to all, are not popular libraries. Their influence on the great mass of the people must be chiefly through an intermediate class of students and teachers. These institutions are of incalculable value; and it should be the pride of every nation to possess such a storehouse of the world's wisdom. So, too, do society, mercantile, and other class libraries have their work, in the performance of which they can not be superseded; but these do not dispense with the need of a public library any more than the Sunday-school and seminary render the common school unnecessary.

It may be said in general that the *raison d'être* of a public library is the same as that of a public reservoir. It is "just as indispensable to the mental health of a city as are its public parks, water supply or sewers to its physical health."

Professor Jevons gives as the first and chief reason for the establishment of free libraries, "the enormous increase of utility which is thereby acquired for the community at a trifling cost."

The net result is that the people are supplied with reading at an extremely small cost and there is thereby an enormous saving of expense. It is not too much to say that a good public library is of more value to the individual than the same

books in his own possession. He has no care of them except to contribute his small portion towards their preservation; they are accessible to him at all times; and more than all he shares the benefit of all the reading done by his fellow-citizens. This is more emphatically true if he have children, whose lives must be greatly influenced by the character of their companions. It is almost as important to him that his neighbor's children should have access to good books as his own. Rev. Edward Everett Hale says: "I should advise any man or woman to give money, time and energy to building up the library of the neighborhood, rather than build up his own, even if he were only thinking of the advantage of his own family."

Considering the subject still further from the material point of view, good libraries, like good schools, draw the best citizens, both those of education, who add to the intelligent directive force of the community, and also that larger class who show their possession of those qualities that make the good citizen by considering first of all the advantages offered by any place for the education of their children. As an important factor in public instruction, there is a yearly increasing recognition of the Public Library. Indeed, that city which does not use the Public Library as an adjunct to the public schools must in a few years see its educational system condemned as antiquated and defective. Any system of education is radically lacking which does not lead to subsequent self-instruction. The Public Library is needed by the high school and college graduate for the continuance of their education; and much more is it needed by the average boy and girl who leave school at the age of twelve or fourteen. That method of education is seriously at fault which does not instill into pupils a desire for further knowledge, which does not impart to them a taste for reading and give them a glimpse of the wonderful world of books, that land of enchantment which to many remains forever unknown; and that social organization is incomplete which does not provide for its

future citizens facilities for the profitable employment of their leisure during these most important formative years. A system of common schools should find its crowning feature in the "people's university," which all may enter at any age, and pursue any course desired without interfering with their bread-winning work, and at an exceedingly small cost to the community. Even those who are opposed to high schools and state universities can hardly object to the small expenditure required for this form of higher education, which increases the capacity of youthful producers and prepares them in every way for a useful citizenship. Of the value of a public library as a factor in general education, Rev. Dr. Huntington, of Worcester, Mass., says: "A more thoroughly democratic device for giving equal chances to all and special privileges to none, could not be imagined. And it is quite conceivable that here in our city many a youth who devotes a fair share of his leisure out of working hours to self-improvement within the walls of the library, may at forty be able to show himself a better taught man than many another who, in early life, enjoyed, at no little outlay of time and money, the advantages of a university education. This view of the subject ought especially to commend itself to the authorities of a manufacturing city."

"The library," says Senator Hoar, "in the new education, is to be an important adjunct to the school. It is to continue through life for many persons the education which the school begins. It is to occasion a revolution in the methods of the school itself. It enables children to begin at an early age the practice of original investigation. That it substitutes for the old fashion of learning by rote a few dry facts and dates, a process which the whole nature of a child loathes, learning with immense labor what he forgets with immense ease."

Indeed, to come to definite individual testimony, a well known lawyer in this city, a college graduate, told me that he had obtained more knowledge and culture from his use of the Public School Library than from his collegiate course. As

Carlyle says: "The true university of these days is a collection of books."

Any one who has watched the intellectual growth of St. Louis during the last ten years can not but see how essential a factor in this has been the aid furnished by our two public libraries. Without them the work done by the numerous Homer, Dante, Emerson, Political Economy and other literary clubs and classes would hardly have been possible. The importance of this culture obtained by those who as mothers and teachers are to shape the character of the coming generation can not be exaggerated. This class work forms, perhaps, the most definite, tangible showing; but it by no means includes all that our libraries have done to promote intellectual activity in our midst. And they have performed a great service to the community. It is one of the important functions of a public library to provide means for pursuing a course of study and for investigating topics to which current events give prominence. The existence of facilities encourages effort which leads to farther efforts, and these again to habits of study which are worth more than a collegiate education. "It is precisely this habit of conscientious, vigorous thoroughness of study which the leaders and teachers of a democratic community specially need."

But besides its general influence in elevating the intellectual standard of a community, a library may be made more directly a powerful factor in its material prosperity. The necessity for industrial education is being universally recognized. The future of St. Louis depends upon its manufactures. We can not thrive on the mere exchange of products. We must make things and make them better than our competitors. To do this we must have educated mechanics, and how are we to get them? The Manual Training School and the School of Fine Arts are doing good work in this direction and those who go out from them will in their directive capacity exercise great influence; but like the High School, they can reach comparatively few. And even if training for industrial pursuits were

introduced as a part of the common school curriculum, it would be of little value without facilities for further study. The only thing which will meet this want is an adequately endowed technological library, a collection of the best books on all the useful arts and trades, elementary books for the young apprentice and the latest and most costly publications for foremen, superintendents and inventors.

An effort will be made this winter to establish such a collection as a department of the Public School Library. At present, our manufacturers and mechanics are either remaining in ignorance of the progress which is being made throughout the world; or else, each is spending a considerable sum of money to keep himself partially informed, while his attempts to utilize his knowledge are made of little avail by the ignorance of his workmen. Think of the enormous "multiplication of utility" to be derived from such a collection of books accessible to all?

THE RESULTS OF INDUSTRIAL EDUCATION

are shown in the progress of England in the last thirty years, in the manufacturing triumphs of Germany since the Franco-Prussian war. And now France seems to be bending her energies to prevent her hated rival from gaining supremacy in arts as well as in arms. As a part of the general awakening to the necessity of a better education for the people, Paris has opened large numbers of industrial schools and communal libraries and has decided to devote two hundred and fourteen thousand francs left to the city in 1879 to establishing a library of industrial art. I can testify that the demand for such books already exists here; and there can be doubt that the demand will grow with the supply. In my opinion this is one of the pressing needs of our city. And here again appears the advantage of having a public library. For the chances of securing to St. Louis this aid to her industrial progress are greatly increased by the existence of the Public School Library, which is a library for all the people, offering the priv-

ilege of membership to all at the same nominal rates, and free to all for purposes of reference.

Again, a public library will often secure to a community valuable collections which, in the absence of such an institution would, upon the death of the owner, be dispersed. And among the minor offices of a public library is to serve as a depository of local publications. In the public library of each city or town should be deposited every book, pamphlet and newspaper relating in any way to the history of the place. There may be other copies of these elsewhere; but all the publications of local interest should be kept in the public library, the only place where they can be made accessible to all, and, therefore, of the greatest value to the community. That this is not a theoretical function I could readily prove by presenting a record of the number of calls at the Public School Library for old files of city papers and even theater programmes, which, like the papers, are preserved and bound, and like them will furnish data to the future local historian

There are men in middle life whose early education was impeded by the difficulty of obtaining books to read. To this scarcity has succeeded, in towns at least, dangerous abundance. Pernicious publications are everywhere thrust before the eyes and into the hands of our youths. For this, as for other social evils, the remedy lies not in prohibition, but in substitution. And once more the public library offers its services to the community with perfect confidence in its power to render most efficient aid to parents and teachers in their efforts to protect their charges from the insidious attacks of this new foe. Let the reading of good books be made a regular school exercise, and the literary taste thus acquired will be the pupil's best safeguard. The boy who knows Tom Hughes will not be so likely to seek the acquaintance of Ned Buntline. Having his heroic standard fixed by "Ivanhoe" he will not be so dazzled by "Three Fingered Jack," and the flash heroes of the blood and thunder weeklies. The girl who has learned to love Miss Alcott and her "Little Women" will not want such books as

the "Bride of an Evening," "Shadowed by Love," and "The Ballet Dancer's Husband."

Now these benefits which I have pictured are not theoretical. They find proof in the individual experience or observation of each one of us. We have ourselves felt the impulse of a good book or the growth and strength derived from a course of study; and we have seen still more plainly its effects upon a child. It is extremely difficult to trace, amid the numerous confluent and conflicting forces, the impulse or influence of any single institution; but we know that certain causes must produce certain effects. We know that in time the steps of the new Post-office will be worn, like those of the old, by the tread of many feet. And when nearly ten thousand men visit the Birmingham Library daily, when the two libraries of St. Louis issue three hundred thousand books a year, we know that the intellectual standard of those cities must be higher than they would be if the libraries did not exist. Such influences are subtile, but none the less potent. Like the constant powers of nature, they work slowly and silently beneath the surface; but in the course of years the result will be seen in a more extended substratum of solid character and intelligence throughout the community. Again, as one of the incidental offices, a public library with a free reading room may be made

AN ADMIRABLE SCHOOL OF MANNERS.

It is easier to trace effects in a small community. Franklin says that as the result of the establishment of the Philadelphia Library Company: "In a few years our people were observed by strangers to be better instructed and more intelligent than people of the same rank in other countries."

One of these strangers corroborates this statement in a volume of letters published in 1774. And in view of the pre-eminence of Philadelphia in manufactures, it is worthy of note that this first of public libraries gave special prominence to books on the mechanic arts.

Did time permit, abundant testimony might be adduced to show the definite good accomplished by public libraries in towns and smaller cities of the East, within the last ten years. It is not too much to say that the libraries of Worcester, Providence, Hartford, Boston and other New England cities have, in that period, brought about a radical reform in public instruction in those cities; and this reform is rapidly extending all over the country. The scope of this paper will admit of only a brief reference to this important function of the public library, which I have made the subject of a paper before the St. Louis Pedagogical Society.

Regarding the influences of libraries in the small manufacturing towns of New England I might make numerous quotations from reports, and also from letters lately received in response to my inquiries for information on this point. One of these letters I submit as illustrating the general tenor of all: —

BRIDGEPORT, Ct., October 31. 1884.

F. M. Crunden, Esq.:

DEAR SIR — Our Public Library has only existed about two years and a half, and the population of our city is rapidly increasing — the new comers being chiefly foreigners.

I can not, therefore, furnish you with any statistics as to the influence of the library upon illiteracy and crime. I believe it reaches as low a class as any library reaches, since very many members belong to the poorest orders of the population. We have a large reading room which is well attended at all times — an especially hopeful feature of our work being the large numbers of youths who steadily pass their evenings in it. Many of these undoubtedly come from degraded homes, and it does not seem too much to hope that the library is saving them from vagabondage and crime. We consider the Sunday opening of the library as our most active missionary effort. Many of our regular Sunday attendants have told us voluntarily that they used formerly to spend their Sundays in low saloons because they had no home but a boarding house. Still I think these are men of decent habits whom loneliness and discomfort led temporarily into vicious courses. I fear we are doing nothing for those who are really vicious and criminal. All we can claim is preventive work.

I think very few of our home-born population are wholly illiterate. I have given this matter great attention, and have almost invariably found that where boys and girls are unable to read and write, they are foreign-born and of recent importation.

The Library has already a very marked influence upon the higher education of our city. Before it opened, there was not a single debating or mutual improvement society here. Now, there are several which are very sensibly managed and well attended. Chautauqua circles, scientific classes, and clubs for the study of art and literature also flourish; all of which are more or less dependent upon the library for help. As the number of our books increases, a complete revolution is taking place in the teaching of our public schools. The old dry routine of mere text-books is being gradually abandoned, and both teachers and pupils use the library constantly in preparing their daily tasks.

Very respectfully,

AGNES HILLS, *Librarian.*

I have used the term Public Library for the most part in the broadest sense, as applying to any library open to the general public. The extent to which it fulfills the various functions I have indicated depends first upon its income; second, upon its management; third, upon its accessibility to the general public; *i.e.*, the terms and conditions upon which the public may enjoy its use. It is, however, safe to say that a well supported, well managed subscription library is unquestionably more valuable than a free library with inadequate support and bad management.

The circulation of the Chicago Library, last year, numbered more than twice as many volumes as the combined circulation of our two libraries. A still larger total is shown by the Public Library of Cincinnati, which city at the same time supports a flourishing mercantile library. The books drawn from the Boston Public Library have for years amounted to over one million volumes annually, nearly five times the combined issue of our two libraries. This does not prevent the prosperity of the Athenæum, an admirable proprietary library, and the existence of innumerable circulating libraries. Six years ago San Francisco, already provided with an excellent mercantile library, opened a free public library, which already has a circulation equal to the combined issue of our two libraries. Indianapolis, with one-fifth the population of St. Louis, has a library, established in 1873, which issues a larger num-

ber of volumes than either of our libraries, though it is not yet so large or so good a library.

During the first year of its operation each book in the Birmingham Library was issued on an average seventeen times, while the bound volumes of periodicals were turned over fifty times. I have already mentioned that this library is daily visited by nearly ten thousand men, and I can state from personal observation that the throngs that frequent the rooms are well behaved and are evidently there for a purpose. It would seem, then, that the fact of a library being free, more than anything else, determines the extent of its use, and therefore, roughly speaking, its value to the community.

I have tried to hold to the theory that what is lightly gained is little valued; but comparative statistics prove beyond dispute that a public library, no matter how amply endowed or how ably managed, can not fully realize its possibilities until it is made entirely free. My last hold on the idea of having some small fee required as an evidence of serious purpose was loosened by the appeal of the Brooklyn Mercantile Library, one of the best libraries in the country, for adoption by the city, and entirely removed by the experience of the Public Library of Springfield, Massachusetts. The management have made persistent efforts to draw in the people. They have a fine building open free to all, and the fee for the privilege of taking books home is only one dollar a year, payable fifty cents at a time; and yet its circulation bears no comparison to that of other libraries which differ from it chiefly in being absolutely free.

I have been forced against previous opinions, and contrary to my intention when I began this paper, to advocate the free popular library as the only form in which this instrument of social reform and regeneration can realize its potentialities. The fact is we must remove all obstacles in the way of the mental and moral elevation of the masses. We can to a certain extent force upon the ignorant an observance of hygienic conditions; but we can only strive to induce in them a regard

for their spiritual health. And there is no more efficient agency for accomplishing this than a free library and a system of public education in which it is recognized as an inseparable adjunct. It is of no use to say that people will not value what they can get for nothing. Intelligent people value pure air; and those who do not must be taught to value it. But it is too late to make any such assertion in face of the actual facts. Says Prof. Jevons, the distinguished sociologist whom I have before quoted: "Among the methods of social reform which are comparatively easy of accomplishment and sure in action, may be placed the establishment of free public libraries. * * * In Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, and some other great towns, where such libraries have already existed for many years, there is but one opinion about them. Perhaps it might be better said that they are ceasing to be a matter of opinion at all, and are classed with town halls, police courts, prisons and poor-houses as necessary adjuncts of our stage of civilization. * * * There is probably no mode of expending public money which gives a more extraordinary and immediate return in utility and innocent enjoyment. It would, nevertheless, be a mistake to rest the claims of the free library simply on the ground of economy. Even if they were very costly, free libraries would be less expensive establishments than prisons, courts of justice, poor houses and other institutions maintained by public money, or the gin palaces, music halls and theaters maintained by private expenditure. * * * The whole annual cost of free libraries is not more than one-fifth part of the cost of a single first-class iron-clad, and is not only repaid many times over by the multiplication of utility of the books, newspapers, and magazines on which it is expended, but it is likely, after the lapse of years, to come back fully in the reduction of poor rates and government expenditure on crime."

There is certainly nothing that would do more for the best interests of St. Louis than the provision of suitable homes and ample endowments for its two libraries. There is abundant

work for both, even if the field of each were greatly enlarged. Experience has shown that free libraries act as pioneers and feeders for subscription libraries. I would not have either library wait for the other, and I hope soon to see the new Mercantile Library building begun; but I think it would be a great convenience and economy to have them under the same roof, and if that is not practicable they should be located as near to each other as possible. For the means to make these institutions the mighty agencies they can be made for the material, mental and moral improvement of our city, the one appeals to the pride of that class which represents the largest share of the wealth and enterprise of the city, and the other to the philanthropy, the far-sighted policy and the intelligent public sentiment of the whole community. Assistance to the first must come from individuals. Public appropriation is a possibility for the latter; but its value would be greatly increased if it should come as one of the conditions of private munificence.

I have rather dwelt on the material benefits offered by libraries because that is regarded as the readiest *argumentum ad hominem*, and, furthermore, because I recognize the fact that material prosperity is the necessary foundation for that elaborate social structure which shall provide for the higher wants of man. The blacksmith must precede the professor; the library and museum can not come into being until sufficient wealth has been accumulated by the counting-house and the factory. But material prosperity is only a means to an end, that end being the happiness and elevation of ourselves and posterity; and how can we better contribute to the accomplishment of this end than by accumulating and preserving for ourselves and our successors that which is of the greatest and most permanent value to mankind. Recorded thought is our chief heritage from the past, and the most lasting legacy we can leave to the future. Books are the most enduring monuments of man's achievements; through them alone we know the lives and labors of our forefathers; through them alone

can we transmit to future ages the activities of to-day; only through them can civilization become cumulative.

Many cities have been reared and overthrown on the disputed site of Troy; but the poem that commemorates its fall is immortal. The temple of Jerusalem is only a vague picture in the mind of the scholar, the ark of the covenant is lost; but the sacred writings of the Jews have survived the fall of the empire and will live forever. The Parthenon is a sad and solemn relic of "the glory that was Greece," the temple of Diana has served only to perpetuate an infamous name; but the words of Socrates and the wisdom of Plato will never cease to instruct and inspire. The Forum is a ruin; in the Coliseum —

Where on golden throne the Monarch lolled,
Glides sceptre-like unto his marble home
The swift and silent lizard of the stones;

but the orations of Cicero and the maxims of Marcus Aurelius are still potent to teach the lessons of patriotism and purity. Macaulay's prefigured New Zealander may centuries hence look about him in vain for the magnificent monument of Sir Christopher Wren; but the book which now lies on its altar and which inspired its building will never fail as a source of inspiration to greater and better achievements than the building of temples or the consecration of mausoleums. The memorial marble of Westminster may crumble into indiscriminate dust, the statues of Shakespeare, Goldsmith and Gray may share the fate of the greater works of Phidas; but "Hamlet," the "Vicar of Wakefield" and the "Elegy in a Country Church-yard" will continue to delight mankind when the pyramids shall have mingled with the sands of the desert. Of all the products of man's efforts, books alone can be assured of immortality, for these contain the immortal part of man, "the true thaumaturgic virtue by which man works all things whatsoever. All that he does and brings to pass is the vesture of a thought." "On all sides," says Carlyle, "are we

not driven to the conclusion that by far the most momentous, wonderful and worthy are the things we call books ! ”

Says Anthony Trollope (and I quote him rather than others because of his known practical character) : “ This habit of reading I make bold to tell you is your pass to the greatest, the purest and the most perfect pleasures that God has prepared for his creatures. * * * It lasts when all other pleasures fade. It will be there to support you when all other recreations are gone. It will be present to you when the energies of your body have fallen away from you. It will last until your death. It will make your hours pleasant to you as long as you live. ” Such and much more fervent tributes could be multiplied indefinitely from the writings of the greatest men.

Unless, then, we are prepared to dispute the utterances of the world's sages, we must regard that as the wealthiest city which contains the greatest number of books ; we must look upon that people as the happiest who read most books ; and we must deem that the wisest State which provides its citizens with the most abundant facilities for obtaining this elevating pleasure. And if as a community we would make good our claim even to an enlightened self-interest, we must do our utmost to foster those institutions which in the highest degree subserve the ends of all commerce and industry, of all thought and labor, of all the multifarious activities of our complex civilization. If from no higher motive than that of self-preservation we must educate all our citizens, for on their enlightenment depends the perpetuity of the Republic. We must begin with the young. They offer the only field for hopeful endeavor. Where the desire for knowledge exists it must be gratified, and it will grow by what it feeds on. We must strive to awaken it in those in whom it lies dormant, who are wholly given over to physical appetites and are hardly conscious of the immortal spirit that is within them. It is no use to say they are no concern to us. The wisest and wealthiest can not wholly dissociate his lot from that of the poorest and vilest. Cholera can not rage in Five Points or Seven Dials

without endangering the health of Belgravia and Murray Hill; and moral contagion is vastly more insidious, more unavoidable and more fearfully fatal than physical infection. We know not when or where it may attack those dearest to us despite our tender solicitude and sheltering care.

Little thinks, in the field, yon red-cloaked clown
Of thee from hill-top looking down;
The heifer that lows in the upland farm,
Far-heard, lows not thine ear to charm;
The sexton, tolling his bell at noon,
Deems not that great Napoleon
Stops his horse, and lists with delight,
Whilst his files sweep round yon Alpine height;
Nor knowest thou what argument
Thy life to thy neighbor's creed has lent.
All are needed by each one;
Nothing is fair or good alone.





